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Please amend the application as follows:

In the Claims

Please amend Claims 1-6, 10, 12-13 and 16 as follows:

- B (
1. (Twice Amended) A method of staining a biological specimen with a histological stain, wherein the specimen is treated by a process that includes treatment with a corrosive reagent, the process comprising the steps of:
 - (a) dispensing onto a biological specimen an oxidizer that is a precursor of the corrosive reagent; and
 - (b) dispensing onto the biological specimen an acid source of hydrogen ions that is other than the corrosive reagent,whereby the oxidizer combines with hydrogen ions and the combination of oxidizer and hydrogen ions contacts the biological specimen, thereby treating the biological specimen with the corrosive reagent.

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2. (Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the histological stain is performed by an automated histological staining instrument.
 3. (Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the histological stain detects or characterizes microorganisms.
 4. (Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the histological stain includes a Grocott's modification of Gomori's methenamine silver method.
 5. (Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the acid source of hydrogen ions is selected from the group consisting of perchloric acid, perbromic acid and nitric acid.
 6. (Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the acid source of hydrogen ions is perchloric acid.

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10. (Amended) A method for detecting the presence or absence of microorganisms in a biological specimen in an automated histological staining process, comprising the steps of:

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- (a) treating the biological specimen with a staining reagent wherein the treatment comprises dispensing from separate liquid dispensers, onto the biological specimen, a source of chromate ions and an acid source of hydrogen ions, the source of chromate ions and the acid source of hydrogen ions being other than chromic acid, thereby combining chromate ions and hydrogen ions, wherein the combination of chromate ions and hydrogen ions contacts the biological specimen;
 - (b) washing the combination of chromate ions and hydrogen ions from the specimen;
 - (c) staining the washed specimen with a histological stain suitable for the detection of microorganisms; and,
 - (d) detecting the presence or absence of microorganisms in the specimen.

12. (Amended) The method of Claim 10 wherein the acid source of hydrogen ions is selected from the group consisting of perchloric acid, perbromic acid and nitric acid.

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13. (Amended) The method of Claim 10 wherein the acid source of hydrogen ions is perchloric acid.

16. (Amended) A method of staining a biological specimen in an automated histological staining procedure, wherein the biological specimen is treated by a process comprising the steps of:

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- (a) combining a source of chromate ions and an acid source of hydrogen ions, wherein said source of chromate ions and said acid source of hydrogen ions are other than chromic acid; and
 - (b) contacting the combination of (a) with the biological specimen, thereby treating the biological specimen.

Amendments to the claims are indicated in the attached "Marked Up Version of Amendments" (pages i - ii).

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Please add new Claims 18 and 19 as follows:

18. (New) A method of staining a biological specimen with a histological stain, wherein the specimen is treated by a process that includes treatment with a corrosive reagent, the process comprising the step of:

86 dispensing from independent liquid dispensers, onto the specimen, precursors of the corrosive reagent, wherein the liquid dispensers include at least one part fabricated from a material incompatible with the corrosive reagent and wherein the precursors are less corrosive to the material than is the corrosive reagent,

whereby the precursors combine *in situ* to form the corrosive reagent, thereby treating the specimen.

19. (New) The method of Claim 18, wherein the material is a plastic material.

REMARKS

Applicant's Attorneys thank the Examiner for the telephone interview of October 22, 2002. Claims 1-6, 10, 12-13 and 16 are amended.

Specifically, Claim 1 is amended to specify that the process includes treatment of a biological specimen with a corrosive acid; that the oxidizer is a precursor of the corrosive acid; and that the source of hydrogen ions is an acid source that is other than the corrosive acid.

Claims 2-4 are amended to recite "stain" rather than "staining."

Claims 5-6 are amended to specify that the source of hydrogen ions is an acid source of hydrogen ions.

Claims 10 and 16 are amended to recite an acid source of hydrogen ions and to set forth that the source of chromate ions and the source of hydrogen ions are other than chromic acid.

Claims 12-13 are amended to recite "acid source of hydrogen ions."

New Claims 18-19 have been added.

Support for the amendments and new Claims 18-19 is found throughout the specification, for instance, at page 6, line 14 to page 7, line 4, at page 8, line 24 to page 9, line 7, in the working Examples and in the originally filed claims. No new matter is being introduced.